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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/24/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [OVIP](#) [IR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: (SBU) Deputy Secretary Negroponte's July 23,
2008 Meeting with Israeli Defense Force Chief of Staff
LTG Gabi Ashkenazi

[1](#)1. Classified by NEA PDAS Jeffrey Feltman. Reasons: 1.4
(b) and (d).

[1](#)2. (SBU) July 23; 4:30pm; Washington, DC, USA.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Participants:

U.S.
Deputy Secretary Negroponte
NEA DAS Gene Cretz
Aaron Jost (D Staff)
Jonathan Peccia (NEA Notetaker)

Israel
LTG Gabi Ashkenazi
Defense Attache MG Benjamin Gantz
Israel J5 BG Yossi Heymann
Pol Counselor Amir Maimon
David Oberman Warshezky, Assistant to IDF COS

[1](#)4. (S) SUMMARY. Deputy Secretary Negroponte met with
Israeli Defense Force Chief of Staff LTG Gabi Ashkenazi
on July 23, 2008 and discussed Iran and the peace
process in the context of Israel's security. Ashkenazi
repeated Israeli concerns that Iran's nuclear program
includes weapons plans, and he pinned progress with the
Palestinians to the Palestinian Authority's success in
securing the territories. END SUMMARY.

IRAN

[1](#)5. (S) Ashkenazi repeated much of what we have heard
before on Iran: that it is an existential threat to
Israel, at the top of Israel's national security and
military agenda, and that despite the findings of our
NIE, there is no doubt that Iran's intent includes
developing weapons capabilities. He said that while
Israel was not planning to take immediate action, the
military option had to be on the table, as a Middle East
under the shadow of a nuclear Iran is unacceptable.
Israel would continue to cooperate with the U.S. on
intelligence matters and would support the diplomatic
and financial measures the U.S. promotes, but it would
also develop other options. He noted that a number of
Sunni Arab countries felt the same
way, though worryingly some also seemed to be looking to
develop their nuclear capability. He also told the
Deputy that it was "not beyond imagination," that within
three months, Israel, constantly trying to develop
humint sources, would have a "smoking gun" to prove
Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapon capability.

[1](#)6. (S) Deputy Secretary Negroponte said that Iran
seemed to be trying to buy time. He noted Under
Secretary Burns' presence at the P5+1 meeting in Geneva,
telling Ashkenazi that this helped keep the others
unified in the face of Iranian intransigence. The
Deputy Secretary said that our Iran policy was, in part,
similar to the containment policy during the Cold War:

we are meeting their efforts to gain influence in and to destabilize the region. However, this was not preventing Iran from continuing their nuclear program. He took Ashkenazi's point to be that while Israel preferred for sanctions and diplomacy to prove effective, Israel would keep planning for a military option.

PALESTINIANS

¶17. (S) Ashkenazi said that the Palestinian Authority (PA) "can't do security." While he thought they might be able to govern, HAMAS's presence in the West Bank was a threat to the PA's authority, and if Israel did not intercede on the security front it would take only months for HAMAS to take over. He attributed HAMAS's power over the PA to its willingness "to kill and be killed," saying HAMAS was more dedicated than the PA.

¶18. (S) On Jenin, where the PA Security Forces (PASF) have deployed, Ashkenazi said that after two weeks, they cut their forces by 50 percent and went to Jericho, having only ever dealt with public order and traffic offenses.

JONES MISSION

¶19. (S) Ashkenazi told Negroponte that he had met with General Jones earlier in the day. Ashkenazi said he understood that Israel's security requirements were "nonstarters," and he was open to creative solutions to all issues except border control. He said border control was the key to a stable Palestinian state, and right now, the Palestinians cannot control them. No Israeli government would be able to negotiate with the Palestinians against a background of terror attacks.

¶10. (S) Ashkenazi defended Israel's system of checkpoints, using Nablus as an example. He said, "We can let the PA get (the terror cells in Nablus); we can get them; or we can contain Nablus with checkpoints." Since the PA cannot or will not, and Israel gets criticized for its operations, it is left with the third option. He said Israel will continue to try to convince the U.S. that it is making efforts to promote the process given its security needs, and that ideally the PA would be handling security.

¶11. (S) Ashkenazi called Jenin an example of a failed experiment, and acknowledged there was a difference in opinion between him and the USG on the issue.
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End Cable Text